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Many remain critical of state of U.S. democracy: AP-NORC poll



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Rioters loyal to President Donald Trump rally at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021. Associated Press

Minister of Justice attending 90th Interpol General Assembly in India



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History of Savaneta present in the play "Cacique Chakamaguay"



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Many remain critical of state of U.S. democracy: AP-NORC poll

From Front

By **GARY FIELDS** and **CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many Americans remain pessimistic about the state of U.S. democracy and the way elected officials are chosen — nearly two years after a divisive presidential election spurred false claims of widespread fraud and a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Only about half of Americans have high confidence that votes in the upcoming midterm elections will be counted accurately, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, though that's an improvement from about 4 in 10 saying that just before the 2020 presidential election. Just 9% of U.S. adults think democracy is working "extremely" or "very well," while 52% say it's not working well.

In a reversal from two years ago, Republicans are now more likely than Democrats to say democracy is not working well. This year, 68% of Republicans feel this way compared with 32% two years ago. The share of Democrats with a sour outlook on how democracy is functioning in the U.S. dropped from 63% to 40%. Ronald McGraw Sr., 67, of Indianapolis, is a retired construction worker who



Supporters of then-President Donald Trump gather for a rally on Jan. 6, 2021, at the Ellipse near the White House in Washington. Associated Press

recently registered to vote and intends to cast a ballot for the first time this year.

"I thought I'd let everybody else put their vote in and just go with the flow, but this whole thing is at stake now," he said, referring to democracy, the economy, "everything, how the whole country runs."

McGraw, who is Black and considers himself a moderate, said a big concern is the political turmoil in the country and the fact that he sees too many self-serving politicians concerned with power, especially those who work against the interest of minorities. He said he registered as a Republican but did not give any thought to party platforms or stances at the time.

"I am paying attention now," he said.

After every presidential election, members of the

losing candidate's party can experience a letdown. The fallout from the 2020 election has been deeper, fueled by the lies from former President Donald Trump and his allies that Democrats stole the election.

There is no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation of voting machines. Exhaustive reviews in key states upheld Democrat Joe Biden's win, while judges — including some appointed by Trump — dismissed numerous lawsuits challenging the outcome. Trump's own attorney general, William Barr, called the claims bogus.

The general despair over democracy comes after decades of increasing polarization nationwide, from the presidential and congressional races down to local contests such as races for school boards.

Overall, just a quarter of U.S. adults — including similar percentages of Republicans and Democrats — say they are optimistic about the way leaders are chosen, while 43% say they are pessimistic. An additional 31% feel neither.

Adam Coykendall, a 31-year-old social studies teacher from Ashland, Wisconsin, said he sees party loyalties driving lawmakers more than the good of the country.

"I feel like everything is becoming a little more divisive, a little more polarized, more focused on party loyalty ... rather than working for your constituency, having things that work for people rather than working for the party," said Coykendall, who described himself as an independent who leans toward the Democratic Party.

The AP-NORC poll also found a large segment of Republicans, 58%, still believe Biden's election wasn't legitimate. That's down slightly from 66% in July 2021.

Gary Phelps, a 70-year-old retired truck driver in Clearwater, Minnesota, accepts Biden is president but doesn't think he was legitimately elected. Phelps said he was concerned about voter fraud, mail ballots being received and counted after Election Day, and irregularities with some voting machines, although he

acknowledged it's based on his feeling rather than evidence.

Phelps remains concerned about the voting process and whether the tallies will be accurate. "I would hope so, but I don't think so," the Republican-leaning independent said.

The poll shows 47% of Americans say they have "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of confidence that the votes in the 2022 midterm elections will be counted accurately. Confidence is highest among Democrats, 74% of whom say they're highly confident. On the Republican side, confidence in elections is decidedly mixed: 25% have high confidence, 30% have moderate confidence and 45% have little to no confidence.

That erosion of trust comes after two years of Trump and his allies promoting lies about the 2020 presidential election and peddling conspiracy theories about voting machines.

Narratives about mailed ballots mysteriously changing vote totals have been one persistent source of misinformation. To be clear, results announced on election night are unofficial and often incomplete. It's normal for counting to continue several days after Election Day, as mailed ballots received by their deadline are processed and added to the tally. □



A portion of the 1040 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return form is shown July 24, 2018, in New York.

Associated Press

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Taxpayers will get fatter standard deductions for 2023 and all seven federal in-

come tax bracket levels will be revised upward as the government allows people to shield more of their money from taxation because of persistently

IRS ups standard deductions, tax brackets due to inflation

high inflation.

For couples who file jointly for tax year 2023, the standard deduction increases to \$27,700 up \$1,800 from tax year 2022, the IRS announced. Single taxpayers and married people filing separately will see their the standard deduction rise to \$13,850, up \$900, and for heads of households, the standard deduction will be \$20,800, up \$1,400.

The adjustments come as inflation accelerated in September, with the Consumer Price Index rising

0.4% last month after just 0.1% in August. Inflation is up 8.2% for the past 12 months.

Some items that were indexed for inflation in the past will remain unchanged, such as the personal exemption, which remains at zero. And the limitation on itemized deductions was eliminated under President Donald Trump.

The government adjusts a variety of benefits and indexes based on inflation. Last week, the Social Se-

curity Administration announced a 8.7% cost of living adjustment increase for benefits recipients beginning in January 2023.

The cost-of living adjustment — the largest in more than 40 years — means the average recipient will receive more than \$140 extra a month beginning in January, the Social Security Administration said. The maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll taxes for 2023 is \$160,200, up from \$147,000 in 2022. □



A doctor uses a hand-held Doppler probe on a pregnant woman to measure the heartbeat of the fetus on Dec. 17, 2021, in Jackson, Miss.

Associated Press

COVID-19 linked to increase in U.S. pregnancy-related deaths

By AMANDA SEITZ
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — COVID-19 drove a dramatic increase in the number of women who died from pregnancy or childbirth complications in the U.S. last year, a crisis that has disproportionately claimed Black and Hispanic women as victims, according to a report released Wednesday. The report lays out grim trends across the country for expectant mothers and their newborn babies.

It finds that pregnancy-related deaths have spiked nearly 80% since 2018, with COVID-19 being a factor in a quarter of the 1,178 deaths reported last year. The percentage of preterm and low birthweight babies also went up last year, after holding steady for years. And more pregnant or postpartum women are reporting symptoms of depression.

"We were already in the middle of a crisis with maternal mortality in our country," said Karen Tabb Dina, a maternal health researcher at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "This really shows that COVID-19 has exacerbated that crisis to rates that we, as a country, are not able to handle."

The nonpartisan U.S. Gov-

ernment Accountability Office, which authored the report, analyzed pregnancy-related deaths after Congress mandated that it review maternal health outcomes in the 2020 coronavirus relief bill.

The maternal death rate in the U.S. is higher than many other developed nations and had been on the rise in the years leading up to the pandemic, but COVID-19 has only worsened conditions here for pregnant women. Women who contract the virus while pregnant face elevated health risks. Staffing shortages and COVID-19 restrictions created more hurdles for expecting mothers to get in-person health care; And pandemic stress has intensified depression, a common condition during pregnancy. Mental health issues likely contributed to the increase in pregnancy-related deaths, Tabb Dina said. Many women who experience depression and anxiety during or after their pregnancy struggle to get the care they need.

"Mental health is the greatest complication in pregnancy that we don't understand," she said.

The biggest spike in deaths came during July through December of last year, as the COVID-19 delta variant infected millions, noted

Carolyn Yocom, a director at the Government Accountability Office.

"It's really clear from the data that the time in which the delta variant spread seemed to correspond to a huge increase in deaths," Yocom said.

The maternal death rate is particularly stark for Black women, who have long faced worse maternal outcomes than their peers.

Pregnancy-related deaths for every 100,000 births climbed from 44 in 2019 to 68.9 among Black women last year. White women had death rates of 26.1 last year, a jump from 17.9 in 2019. Death rates among Hispanics had been on the decline, but they swelled again during the pandemic from 12.6 per 100,000 in 2019 to 27.5 last year.

Black and Hispanic people have also died at higher rates from COVID-19, in part because they have less access to medical care and often work essential jobs that exposed them to the virus.

Long before COVID-19 began spreading, the stage was set for Black, low-income and rural women to receive subpar pregnancy care -- putting them at further risk for their pregnancies to go wrong, according to a separate GAO report. □



The Treasury Building is viewed in Washington, May 4, 2021.

Associated Press

U.S. sanctions Mexicans linked to powerful Sinaloa drug cartel

By FATIMA HUSSEIN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Treasury Department on Wednesday sanctioned a group of people and companies connected to Mexico's powerful Sinaloa drug cartel, including a sibling involved in the family-run Valenzuela drug trafficking organization.

The sanctions against Juan Francisco Valenzuela Valenzuela and his organization, sometimes called the Valenzuela DTO, freeze all their property and other interests in the U.S. and bar Americans and American companies from doing business with them.

Valenzuela and his siblings Jorge Alberto Valenzuela Valenzuela and Wuendi Yuridia Valenzuela Valenzuela were arrested in 2020 and 2021 as their organization was accused of importing and transporting multi-ton quantities of illicit drugs, including methamphetamine, heroin and fentanyl, from Mexico to the United States.

"The Valenzuela drug trafficking organization fuels the ongoing drug epidemic we face in the United States, which has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Americans annually," Treasury Under Secretary Brian Nelson said. "Starving this network of resources will help deprive the Sinaloa cartel of critical support it needs to traffic its dangerous illicit drugs."

Nearly 92,000 people in the U.S. died from overdoses involving drugs, including illicit drugs and prescription opioids, in 2020, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Treasury said it also sanctioned Valenzuela DTO members Hector Alfonso Araujo Peralta and Raul Rivas Chaires and three Mexico-based transportation companies accused of completing transactions that contributed to the international proliferation of illicit drugs.

In October 2021, federal drug trafficking indictments were returned in California against Juan Francisco Valenzuela Valenzuela, Peralta and Chaires. Valenzuela and his siblings were in custody and couldn't be reached for comment. Peralta and Chaires are fugitives.

The Sinaloa cartel's notorious drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman was convicted in 2019 of running an industrial-scale smuggling operation. At his trial, prosecutors said evidence gathered since the late 1980s showed he and his murderous cartel made billions of dollars by smuggling tons of cocaine, heroin, meth and marijuana into the U.S. □

NYC opens emergency center for influx of bused migrants

By DEEPTI HAJELA
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A complex of giant tents built on an island opened Wednesday as New York City's latest temporary shelter for an influx of international migrants being bused into the city by southern border states.

The humanitarian relief center on Randall's Island is intended to be a temporary waystation for single, adult men — many from Venezuela — who have been arriving several times per week on buses chartered predominantly from Texas.

Spartan and utilitarian, the tents include cots for up to 500 people, laundry facilities, a dining hall and phones for residents to make international calls.

The city's plan is to bring single men to the facility after they come into the main Manhattan bus terminal and to house them there for a period of days while determining next steps, officials said. The first arrivals were brought to the center on Wednesday.

"We needed a different type of operation that gave us the time and space to welcome people, provide them a warm meal, shower, a place to sleep, to understand their medical needs, to really then work with them to figure out what their next step is going to be," said Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol.

The white, plastic-walled tents also include a space



New York's Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Manuel Castro, far left, Health and Hospital Vice President Dr. Ted Long, second from left, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Anne Williams-Isom, second from right, and Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol, far right, hold a news briefing in the sleeping area of the city's latest temporary shelter on Randall's Island, Oct. 18, 2022, in New York.

where migrants can meet with case workers to determine their next steps, as well as a recreational room with televisions, video games and board games. They are heated, since overnight autumn temperatures can fall into the 40s and 30s. In the sleeping area, row upon row of green cots stretch out, each one with a pillow, some sheets and a blanket, and some towels. The city said it will be able to double the sleeping capacity of the tents, if needed.

Similar types of tents have been used as temporary shelters in other places, like the southern U.S. border. In recent years, both the Trump and Biden adminis-

trations have come under criticism for conditions in some tents, including overcrowding.

In recent months, New York City has seen an unexpected increase in migrants seeking asylum in the United States who have been sent to the city from other states including Texas and Arizona. The influx has put a strain on the city's shelter system, leading officials to look for other places to house people and propose the temporary tent facilities. Migrant families with children are being housed in a hotel.

New York City's homeless shelter system is now bursting with more than 63,300 residents. While there are

fewer families in the shelters now than there were in the years before the pandemic, the number of single men has soared since the spring, largely because of the influx of migrants. There were more than 20,000 single adults in the shelter system Monday, up 23% from the nightly average in July. Mayor Eric Adams declared a state of emergency earlier this month, calling the increased demand being put on the city "not sustainable."

The tents were initially planned for a far-off corner of the Bronx, but were moved after concerns about flooding and criticism from immigrant advocates over the remote

location. Iscol said the Randall's Island location was safe from flooding.

Advocates remain concerned even with the new location, questioning what conditions migrants will be kept in, and whether the support they get will be adequate.

Kathryn Kliff, an attorney with The Legal Aid Society, said there were questions about what kind of oversight would be maintained at the center, which is not part of the city's homeless shelter system and so does not fall under the same court-ordered oversight some of the shelters do.

And there were still concerns about why migrants were in tents at all, instead of buildings like hotels.

Murad Awawdeh, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition, said in a statement that opening the tent center was "a stain on our city's rich history of welcoming immigrants and morally reprehensible. ... To continue ignoring the calls from advocates and other city officials to utilize alternative and more appropriate housing options, and instead begin implementing this dangerous plan, Mayor Adams has compromised New York City's status as a beacon of hope."

Randall's Island is located in the waters between the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens. Five bridges connect it to the three boroughs, and the city's subway system is a bus ride or walk away. □

Associated Press



Sammie Clark, 11, left, and Nevaeh Curran, 11, explore a flooded mobile home community in Iona, an unincorporated community in Lee County near Fort Myers, Fla., Sept. 29, 2022.
Associated Press

Florida sees rise in flesh-eating bacteria amid Ian concerns

FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP) — Florida has seen an increase in cases of flesh-eating bacteria this year driven largely by a surge in the county hit hardest by Hurricane Ian.

The state Department of Health reports that as of Friday there have been 65 cases of vibrio vulnificus infections and 11 deaths in Florida this year. That compares with 34 cases and 10

deaths reported during all of 2021.

In Lee County, where Ian stormed ashore last month, the health department reports 29 cases this year and four deaths. Health officials didn't give a breakdown of how many of the cases were before or after Ian struck.

Lee County health officials earlier this month warned people that the post-hur-

ricane environment — including warm, standing water — could pose a danger from the potentially deadly bacteria.

"Flood waters and standing waters following a hurricane pose many risks, including infectious diseases such as vibrio vulnificus," the county health department said in a news release Oct. 3 that urged the public to take precautions. □

Putin declares martial law in annexed regions of Ukraine

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin declared martial law Wednesday in the four regions of Ukraine that Moscow annexed and gave all regional governors in Russia emergency powers that open the door for sweeping new restrictions throughout the country.

Putin didn't immediately spell out the steps that would be taken under martial law, but said his order was effective starting Thursday. His decree gave law enforcement agencies three days to submit specific proposals and orders the creation of territorial defense forces in the annexed regions.

The upper house of Russia's parliament quickly endorsed Putin's decision to impose martial law in the annexed Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia regions. The approved legislation indicated the declaration may involve restrictions on travel and public gatherings, tighter censorship and broader authority for law enforcement agencies. "We are working to solve very difficult large-scale tasks to ensure Russia's security and safe future, to protect our



Russian President Vladimir Putin listens to Samara Region Governor Dmitry Azarov during their meeting in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2022.

Associated Press

people," Putin said in televised remarks at the start of a Security Council meeting. "Those who are on the frontlines or undergoing training at firing ranges and training centers should feel our support and know that they have our big, great country and unified people behind their back."

On Saturday, the Russian Defense Ministry said two men fired at soldiers on a military firing range near Ukraine, killing 11 and wounding 15. The ministry said two men from an unnamed former Soviet republic fired on volunteer soldiers during target practice before they were killed

by return fire. Putin didn't provide details of the extra powers the heads of Russian regions will have under his decree. However, the order states that measures envisaged by martial law could be introduced anywhere in Russia "when necessary."

According to the Russian legislation, martial law could require banning public gatherings, introducing travel bans and curfews, and conducting censorship, among other restrictions.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin's order doesn't anticipate the closure of Russia's borders,

state news agency RIA-Novosti reported. In an apparent attempt to assuage a nervous public, regional authorities rushed to declare that no immediate curfews or restrictions on travel were planned.

Putin last month ordered a mobilization of army reservists, prompting hundreds of thousands of men to flee Russia. The Russian leader on Wednesday also ordered the establishment of a Coordination Committee to increase interactions between government agencies in dealing with the fighting in Ukraine, which Putin continued to call a "special military operation." Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, who was named to lead the committee, said it would focus on boosting supplies of weapons and military equipment, conducting construction work and facilitating transportation.

In Russia's regions bordering Ukraine, authorities plan to tighten security at key facilities and conduct checks of motorists, among other measures, according to Andrei Kartapolov, head of the defense committee of Russian lower house of parliament. □

UK: Protester calls assault at Chinese Consulate 'barbaric'

LONDON (AP) — A Hong Kong protester on Wednesday described getting pulled into the Chinese Consulate in Manchester, England, and beaten up by several staff members during an incident that has escalated tensions be-

tween Britain and China. Bob Chan said he and others were holding a peaceful antigovernment protest outside the consulate on Sunday when masked men came out, tore down the protesters' banners and dragged him inside the

buildings gates. Speaking during a news conference in London, Chan rejected the Chinese government's claim that he had illegally entered the consulate's grounds and threatened its security.

"The attack only stopped when police pulled me outside. Let me say again: It is clear I was dragged into the consulate. I did not attempt to enter the consulate voluntarily," he said.

British lawmakers, including former Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith, have urged the U.K. government to expel any Chinese diplomats involved. Chan's supporters alleged the Chinese consul general in Manchester and other Chinese diplomats took part in the reported assault. Chan, who recently fled Hong Kong after Beijing in-

tensified its crackdown on civil liberties in the city, said he suffered injuries to his eyes, his back and his head where his hair was pulled. He described the attack as "barbaric" and "unprovoked." "I believe the U.K. is a very safe place, a place with freedom of speech. That (Chinese) consulate staff can so brazenly pull someone inside and beat them up in broad daylight is unimaginable," he said. "It's shocking, and this should not happen." China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said a protester "illegally entered" the consulate and "jeopardized the security of the Chinese diplomatic premises," and that Chinese diplomatic missions abroad have the right to take "necessary measures" to maintain security. □



Hong Kong protester Bob Chan, left, who alleged he was dragged into the Chinese Consulate in Manchester and beaten up during a demonstration, poses with British MP Iain Duncan Smith during a news conference in London, Wednesday, Oct. 19 2022.

Associated Press

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U.N. vote delayed on sanctions to curb Haiti violence, crime

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

Supporters of a U.N. resolution that would demand an immediate end to violence and criminal activity in Haiti and impose sanctions on influential gang leader Jimmy Cherizier, nicknamed "Barbecue," said Wednesday a vote has been delayed.

The Security Council vote had been called for the afternoon but key Security Council members confirmed the postponement for a few days.

France's U.N. Ambassador Nicolas De Riviere told reporters earlier: "I'm not sure the vote will be today -- it could take a little more."

The sanctions measure is the first of two resolutions on Haiti sponsored by the United States and Mexico to be considered by the U.N.'s most powerful body. A second resolution, which is still being worked on, would authorize an international force to help improve security in the country in response to an Oct. 7 request from Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

Russia's Deputy U.N. Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky told the council Monday that Moscow can't support "attempts to push through a sanctions resolution" and agreed to look into imposing restrictive measures only after considering their "efficiency," targeted nature and humanitarian consequences.

The sanctions resolution names Cherizier, but would also impose sanctions on other Haitian individuals and groups whose actions threaten the peace, security or stability of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, according to the final draft obtained by The Associated Press.

Daily life in Haiti began to spin out of control last month just hours after prime minister Henry said fuel subsidies would be eliminated, causing prices to double. Gangs blocked the entrance to the Varreux fuel terminal, leading to a severe shortage of fuel at a time when clean water is also scarce and the coun-



Jimmy Cherizier, alias Barbecue, a former police officer who heads a gang coalition known as "G9 Family and Allies, leads a march to demand justice for slain Haitian President Jovenel Moise in Lower Delmas, a district of Port-au-Prince, Haiti July 26, 2021.

try is trying to deal with a deadly cholera outbreak. Cherizier, a former police officer who leads an alliance of Haitian gangs known as the "G9 Family and Allies," would face an international travel ban, asset freeze and arms embargo if the resolution is adopted. A Security Council committee would be established to designate other Haitians and groups to be put on a sanctions blacklist.

"Cherizier and his G9 gang confederation are actively blocking the free movement of fuel from the Varreux fuel terminal — the largest in Haiti," the draft resolution says. "His actions have directly contributed to the economic paralysis and humanitarian crisis in Haiti."

Cherizier also "has engaged in acts that threaten the peace, security, and stability of Haiti and has planned, directed, or committed acts that constitute serious human rights abuses," the draft resolution says.

While serving in the police, it says, he planned and participated in a deadly attack in November 2018 in the capital's La Saline neighborhood where at least 71 people were killed, over 400 houses destroyed and at least seven women raped by armed gangs.

In a video posted on Facebook last week, Cherizier called on the government to grant him and G9 members amnesty and to void all arrest warrants against them.

He said in Creole that Haiti's economic and social situation is worsening by the day, so "there is no better time than today to dismantle the system."

He outlined a transitional plan for restoring order in Haiti. It would include creation of a "Council of Sages" with one representative from each of Haiti's 10 departments to govern the country with an interim president until a presidential election could be held in February 2024. It also calls for restructuring Haiti's National Police and strength-

ening the army.

The draft resolution expresses "grave concern about the extremely high levels of gang violence and other criminal activities, including kidnappings, trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, and homicides, and sexual and gender-based violence including rape and sexual slavery, as well as ongoing impunity for perpetrators, corruption and recruitment of children by gangs and the implications of Haiti's situation for the region."

It demands "an immediate cessation of violence, criminal activities, and human rights abuses which undermine the peace, stability and security of Haiti and the region."

And it urges "all political actors" to engage in negotiations to overcome the crisis in Haiti and allow legislative and presidential elections to be held "as soon as the local security situation permits."

Political instability has simmered ever since last year's still-unsolved assassination

of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, who had faced opposition protests calling for his resignation over corruption charges and claims that his five-year term had expired. Moïse dissolved Parliament in January 2020 after legislators failed to hold elections in 2019 amid political gridlock.

Haiti has been gripped by inflation, causing rising prices that have put food and fuel out of reach for many, as well as protests that have brought society to the breaking point. Violence is raging, making parents afraid to send their kids to school. Hospitals, banks and grocery stores are struggling to stay open. Clean water is scarce and the country is trying to deal with a cholera outbreak.

The president of neighboring Dominican Republic, which shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, recently described the situation as a "low-intensity civil war."

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield announced Monday that a resolution on a "non-U.N." mission to help Haiti was being prepared.

It would be limited in time and scope and will be led by "a partner country," which was not identified, "with the deep, necessary experience required for such an effort to be effective," she said. It would have a mandate to use military force if necessary.

Thomas-Greenfield said the proposed mission was in response to Henry's Oct. 7 request and reflects one option suggested in a letter from U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to the council Oct. 9 that called for deployment of a rapid action force by one or several U.N. member nations to help Haiti's National Police.

Mexico's U.N. Ambassador Juan Ramon de la Fuente Ramirez said earlier Tuesday that he expected action "very, very soon" on the sanctions resolution, "and then we'll have to start working on the second one which is going to take a little more work and a few more days." □

Aruba Karate Bond successfully completed first National Course for Referee and Coach

ORANJESTAD – It was a historical moment in the trajectory of Aruba Karate Bond (AKB) when on Thursday 13th of October 2022, the first national course for referee and coach took place at the Hyatt Place Business Center in a very positive and nice atmosphere.

The board of Aruba Karate Bond, under Chairman Felix Tromp congratulates instructor sensei Gustavo Velasquez for his great contribution in preparing

and giving the course to a total of 16 participants. The participants are members of Aruba Karate bond of the organizations SKIF Aruba, RyuBuKai Aruba and Shotokai Aruba. They were Shawn-Carl Solagnier, Tiana Tromp, Juan David Velasquez, Genesis Tromp, Jeshua Mejia, Olga Guaitarilla, Mariana Rodriguez, Edith Shaw Vargas, Bachera Marin, Andrés Piña, Lipika Motwani, Frederik Quandus, Jean Pierre Winterdaal, Jesus Calderon, Kyran Tromp

and Zillion Bruges. The course covered all rules of the World Karate Federation. Also the course included different tips for kumite (combat between karateka) and kata (karate technique and imaginary combat) divided under the function of either referee or coach.

The course ended in an exam where four participants succeeded as referee, nine succeeded as coach, and three are from the selection (Jeshua Mejia, Kyran Tromp and Zillion Bruges) who participated as a test (to measure) their theoretical knowledge in order to be better prepared for championships.

The board of Aruba Karate Bond congratulates the participants and said they are preparing for the special day in which they will hand out certifications. Finally, the board thanked its group of volunteers who always help to execute this type of events. □



Minister of Justice attending 90th Interpol General Assembly in India

ORANJESTAD – Aruban Minister of Justice and Social Affairs, Mr. Rocco Tjon is currently attending the 90th Interpol General Assembly in India, which is focused on fighting organized crime, financial crimes and corruption.

During the opening of this congress, in which 195 countries are participating, the Prime Minister of India,

Mr. Narendra Modi focused on the importance of fighting financial crime, organized crime and corruption.

Jurgen Stock, General Secretary of Interpol, explained the importance of global security that was established through cooperation and the sharing of information between agencies of law enforcement. Aside from this, the president of



Interpol, Mr. Ahmed Naser al-Raisi explained the importance of the collaboration between the 195 countries that are members of Interpol. For this, Interpol makes available technology for gathering of information to use in analyzing and sharing information.

According to minister Tjon, it is important for Aruba to make better use of the vari-

ous initiatives that Interpol offers to member countries. The opportunities are diverse, varying from help in fighting crime to capacity building for those working in the judiciary apparatus.

The strategic agenda of the Aruban ministry of Justice and Social Affairs, which was shared with the Parliament of Aruba, is precisely focused on these aspects,

according to a press release.

The upcoming days at the Congress, aside from the official program, the Aruban delegation will be carrying out different conversations with representatives from Interpol and other countries' delegations in order to fortify the above-mentioned points. □



Bowls Noodle Bar recently opened at their new location at The Village, near the High Rise Hotels. To celebrate, they are launching their new Happy Hour from 9pm to 11pm every day.

Before the pandemic, Bowls Noodle Bar opened at the Hyatt by the airport, and was in the process of opening a second location at The Village when the pandemic hit. Due to the consequences of the pandemic, they decided to close the restaurant by the airport and open their new location at The Village. Their new location has been open for about six months to great results.

Bowls Noodle Bar invites you to take advantage of their October Specials

At The Village, night time is the best time. This is why they are now offering a daily Happy Hour, from 9pm to 11pm. It includes \$3 beer and \$5 cocktails.

Their cocktails are made in-house with a unique fusion of Asian flavors, for example, the popular purple Ube Mojito, with the flavor of traditional Ube, a Japanese dessert; the Blue Samurai with ginger flavor; and the refreshing Fruity Blossoms, with a flavor encompassing the Sakura, the famous Japanese Cherry Blossoms. You can try all these for only \$5 each during Happy Hour.

Fusion is at the core of the unique flavors of Bowls Noodle Bar, and this is expressed beautifully in their traditional Japanese soups. They are the only restaurant in Aruba that has most of the noodles traditionally used, Udon, Ramen, and Rice noodles. Ramen noodles, served fresh, are a surprising flavor for those who are used to dried ramen noodles. They also have Jasmine rice for the rice bowls.

Their authentic soups are the highlight and star. Chef Warren explains that there are four main components to the soup: the broth, the noodles, tare, and the oil, and these are very important for the traditional Japanese soups. At Bowls Noodle Bar, they have a wide variety of flavors to cater to every taste, like the famous Pork Chashu. It comes with fresh ramen noodles, and it's the pride of Bowls Noodle Bar. Chef Warren says that the broth for this soup takes two to three days to make, and is made in-house, with fresh and delicious ingredients. They also cater to vegetarians and vegans, with various options on the menu like tofu mushroom soup, vegetable gyoza, wonton, and fresh kimchi fermented at the restaurant.



The wok concept also allows you to create your own unique dish, choosing your base, protein, vegetables and sauce.

Origin

The founders of Bowls Noodle Bar, Dexter Moreno and his partner Lai, opened their first location on Curaçao. They traveled to Japan to study Japanese Cuisine, and they fell in love with Japanese soup. Lai's parents are Chinese, and this is the start of the Asian-fusion flavors that are both surprising and delectable, combining Japanese, Chinese and even some Korean cuisine. Chef Warren was trained in these traditional flavors by the founders themselves.

They came to Aruba where Dexter approached some ex-colleagues in the industry to open a location on the island, and with a local team, opened Bowls Noodle Bar Aruba with a more extensive menu.

And for the month of October Bowls Noodle Bar has created an October Special. Mondays you can get 20% off on your entire bill, Tuesdays is Dollar to Florins on all food, beers and wines, Wednesday you can get 20% off on Noodle Soups, Thursday is 20% off on Stir Fry and Friday is 20% off on Izakaya.

Opening hours are Monday to Thursday 5pm – 11:30pm; Friday and Saturday 5pm – 12pm; and Sunday 5pm – 11:30pm. Come visit for great atmosphere, delicious flavors, and a Happy Hour to remember! ☐

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Every Wednesday

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International Amphibious Exercise in Aruba

The international exercise 'Très Kolos' is held once every two years and this year on and near Aruba. This will take place from October 19 till 26. During this period Dutch, American and French soldiers shall participate in this exercise. Soldiers participate in the exercise. This year, Aruban military personnel are also taking part in the exercise.

Très Kolos (three colors)

since 2010 is known by this name. The three colors refer to the colors of the flags from the historical participating countries. The exercises consist of a competitive part of military activities and a part with tactical exercises. The competition part includes elements such as a speed march, a water obstacle course, an amphibious crossing, shooting and navigation assignments.

The tactical part consists of various exercises in which divergent military scenarios are practiced.

All activities that are executed during Très Kolos are particularly challenging activities. Military and physical skills are heavily addressed hereby, in order to bring out the best in the teams in terms of sportsmanship, cooperation, integration and



competition. The aim of the exercise is to further consolidate and expand the integration and mutual relations between the various armed forces. This is to be

even better prepared for the challenges that the Caribbean brings with it, such as emergency aid during a hurricane passage. □



Buoyant tourism bolsters Aruban economy in the second quarter of 2022

Today, the Centrale Bank van Aruba (CBA) published the State of the Economy report for the second quarter of 2022. The publication contains national, as well as international economic developments. The highlights of this publication are presented below.

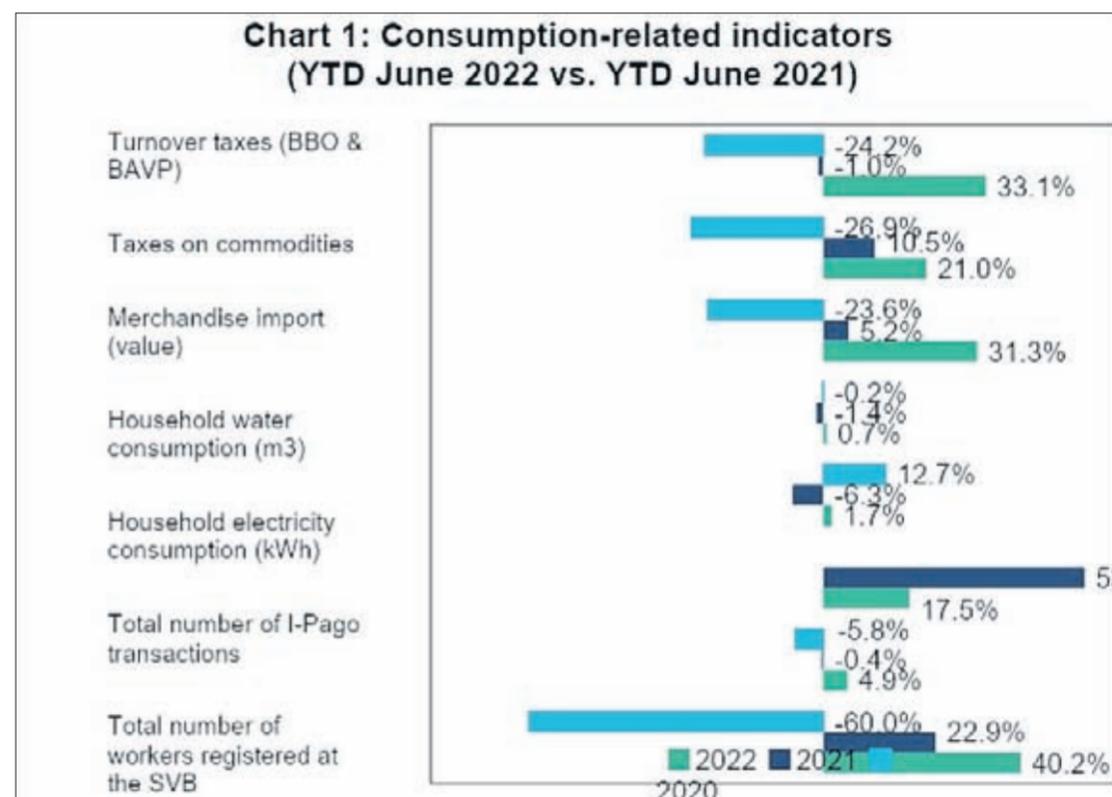
In the second quarter of 2022, the economy of Aruba continued on a growth track compared to the same period in 2021. The 5.7 percent growth in real GDP derived from the last- ing positive momentum in Aruba's tourism sector. Measured indicators for investment and consumption demonstrated an increase in economic activity.

This persistent recovery was connected to an increase in stay-over visitors and nights, which boosted hotel operations (Table 1). In the first half of 2022, Aruba saw a 61.9 percent climb in stay-over visitors compared to the first half of 2021, and reached 91.8 percent of 2019 pre-COVID-level. A surge in U.S. arrivals (+46.5 percent) fueled the high number of stay-over visits, along with growth in all markets. The increased tourism demand caused a rise in occupied room nights (+63.1 percent) and other hotel sector indicators. Aside from stay-over visitors, cruise visitors also contributed to the recovery, registering a growth of 16,481.0 percent year-on-

year. Most consumption-related indicators were positive, pointing to a rise in consumption. Two of these indicators, being turnover taxes (+33.1 percent) and commodity taxes (+21.0 percent), soared due to a combination of the elevated level of tourism activity and an uptick in domestic consumption (Chart 1). The increase in consumption was noticeable in Aruba's trade deficit, which widened by Afl. 263.5 million, resulting from the surge in import (+31.3 percent) on account also of higher import prices.

Furthermore, investment indicators largely showed improvement compared to the first half of 2021. Among these indicators, the value of imported base metals and derivated works grew by a notable 39.3 percent in the first half of 2022 (2021 Jan-Jun: -9.8 percent), while the value of imported machinery and electrotechnical equipment surged by 23.6 percent (2021 Jan-Jun: +6.2 percent). Additionally, in the first half of 2022, new commercial and housing mortgages demonstrated expansions in both value and number compared to the first half of 2021.

In line with international price developments, the consumer price index (CPI) remained on its upward trend reaching 103.3 in June of 2022. The 5.3 percent climb in the end-of-



period inflation was primarily attributed to gasoline prices (+2.9 percentage points) and food and non-alcoholic beverages (+1.2 percentage points). Additionally, the end-of-period core inflation, which excludes food and energy, totaled 2.0 percent compared to -0.4 percent in June of 2021. The 12-month average inflation rate reached 3.4 percent at the end of June 2022, continuing its upward path. Nonetheless, the real exchange rate for the Aruban florin vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar trended downwards during the first half of 2022. This downward trend is a result of consumer prices in the United States rising faster than those in Aruba.

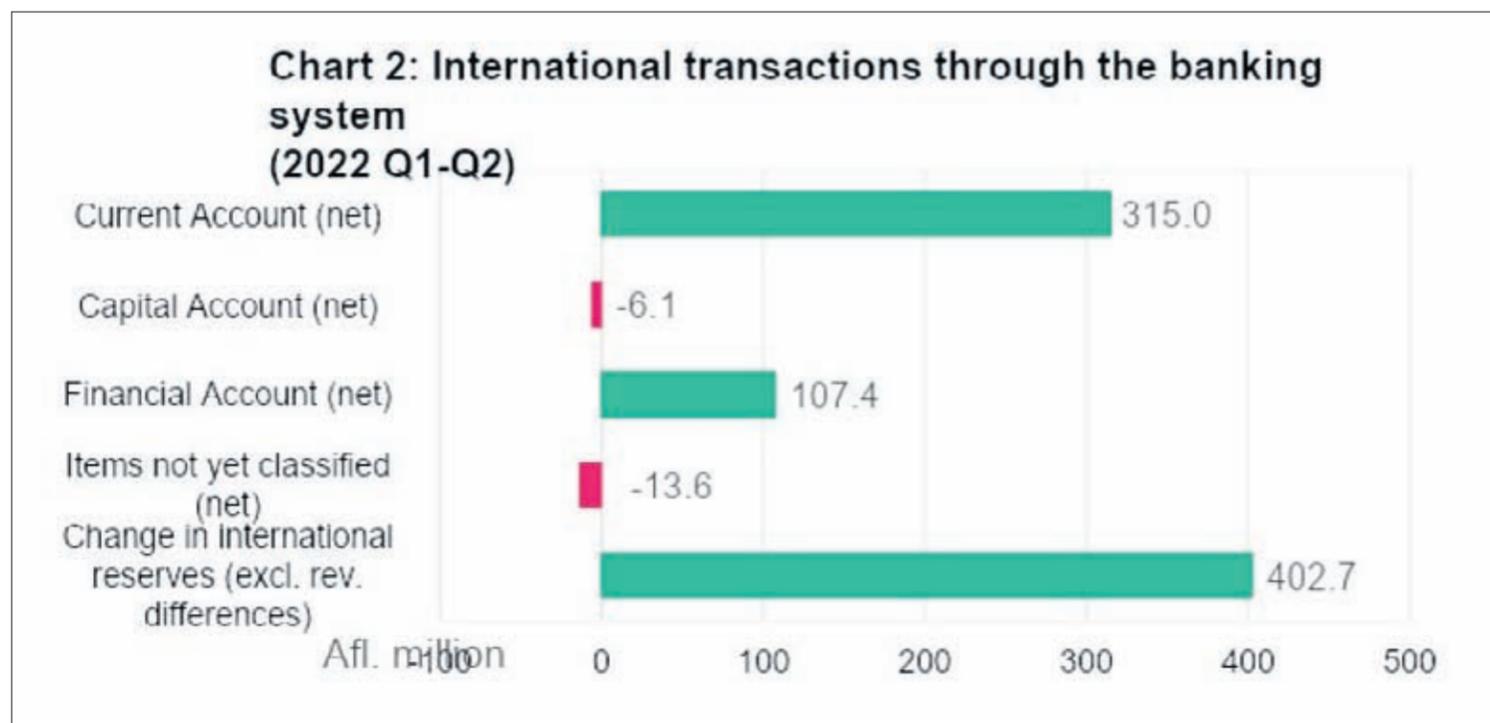
International transactions settled through the banking sector resulted in a significant net inflow of foreign exchange of Afl. 402.7 million pushing the level of international reserves to Afl. 3,286.8 million (incl. gold and excl. revaluation differences) (Chart 2). Both the current and financial accounts of the balance of payments contributed to this outcome, recording net foreign exchange inflows of, respectively, Afl. 315.0 million and Afl. 107.4 million. The significant rise in international reserves stemmed from a net inflow of tourism revenues registered at commercial banks and government foreign borrowing via a loan agreement with the Netherlands to finance maturing

external debt in 2022. Consequently, the level of international reserves remained adequate and well above the benchmarks monitored by the CBA.

In the first half of 2022, based on available information, the Government of Aruba's (GoA) fiscal deficit dropped to Afl. 16.8 million, Afl. 313.3 million less than in the same period of 2021. This contraction was due to a decline in government expenditures (-Afl. 161.6 million) and a robust increase in government revenues (+Afl. 151.2 million). Despite the revenue growth noted in the first half of 2022, it remained below the 2019-level (90.3 percent of 2019 figures), indicating that there is still a gap to bridge before reaching full recovery.

In June 2022, government debt reached Afl. 5,969.0 million, up from Afl. 5,655.6 million in December 2021. An expansion of Afl. 243.5 million in foreign debt caused this higher debt stock. The debt-to-GDP ratio increased by 0.6 percentage point and stood at 101.7 percent in June 2022 compared to the end of 2021.

The complete publication is available on the CBA's website. (<https://www.cbaruba.org/document/state-of-the-economy>).



History of Savaneta present in the play “Cacique Chakamaguay”

ORANJESTAD – Atelier’s 89 with the support of CEDE Aruba organizes the project “Art in the Neighborhood”, a project encompassing different disciplines directed at children. This Saturday, they will be presenting the theatre play “Cacique Chakamaguay”.

Art in the Neighborhood was present in the district of San Nicolas a few days ago with the visual category and now will be at the Centro di Bario Savaneta where Ferdinand Franca, director of the play, will present together with eleven children the theatre play “Cacique Chakamaguay”.

In an interview with our reporter, Franca expressed that Art in the Neighborhood is an initiative that is present in all districts free of cost; the children don’t have to pay to receive lessons. “It is a project intended to motivate and stimulate children to enter the world of art in every discipline and to get to know art, so that they can continue down the path of dancing or theatre in the future. That is the main goal”, he said.

Franca, who is a CKV teacher (Cultural and Artistic Formation) is certified for working with primary and secondary school children as well as special needs. Currently he is giving art lessons in secondary school. He also directs different projects, for example a few months ago he directed a musical. He is someone involved in a variety of projects “in order to also revive theatre this way. As we can see, there is not a lot of theatre particularly for children.”

He is also in the process of establishing a foundation, which will be known at a later date.

Regarding the play “Cacique Chakamaguay”, which the children together with Franca produced in one month’s time, which is how long the project lasts. The play incorporates other disciplines like music and

dance.

“This is a play about a history of Savaneta because it is set in Savaneta. I go a little bit into history.” He also pointed out that he received help from Aruban historian Dufi Kock regarding historical facts of how the Caquetio Indians arrive in Aruba, and how they encountered Spaniards like Alonso de Ojeda, all which is part of our history and will be presented in the play. He assures that this is not only for entertainment but also contributes to education and awareness.

He said the play has duration of 20 to 30 minutes. Acting in it are about 11 child actors between the ages of 7 and thirteen years. It covers a part of the origin of Aruba, which the natives called Ora Uba and the Spanish called Ora Ubo – because “there was gold” but now there is no gold anymore. The play adds new content to these historical facts and the children also added improvisation. They investigated how families lived in the past, and the children together with Franca created this theatre play.

Franca says that the name “Cacique Chakamaguay”

came from a person who helped them at the Centro di Bario. He told Franca that in the past, there was an Indian called Chakamaguay. This name stayed in the person’s memory, and then Franca decided to use it for the main character of the play because they found the name pretty. He will be the most important person in the story, according to Franca. He also said that back then the Indians had chiefs – cacique. “There are some names included like Bushiri, words that we use nowadays that we don’t know come from the natives, that I included to fill the contents of the play.”

The plot is about a young cacique who goes fighting to save his family. “We all know the Spaniards came here to imprison the natives, let’s put it like that. Then I made it a little prettier and not as cruel as history can be”, Franca commented.

The play will be presented this Saturday, 22nd of October at the Centro di Bario Savaneta. However, if other neighborhoods show an interest, the play can be performed there as well, according to Franca. “I find it



very nice if other neighborhoods can see the same play”, Franca said.

The eleven children participating in the play were advertising for it in Savaneta and surrounding areas, asking in afterschool centers and schools in the neighborhood in there were children interested in taking part in this play in or-

der to complete the group that will be performing this Saturday. The play is presented from 7 to 8pm and entrance is free.

One photograph shows the book “History of Savaneta” from historian Dufi Kock illustrated by Franco Koolman. The other photograph shows Ferdinand Franca. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

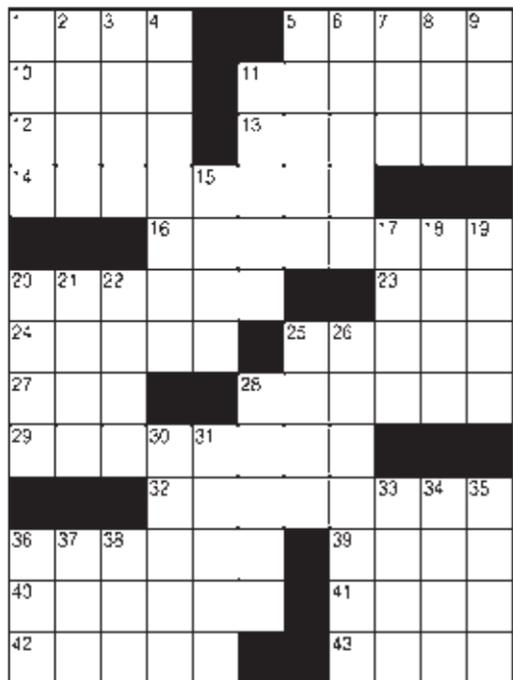
ACROSS **DOWN**

- 1 High point
- 5 Trio, e.g.
- 10 Dupe
- 11 Complain
- 12 Verdi song
- 13 Blackout thief
- 14 Hotel staffers
- 16 Stretchy garments
- 20 Great traits
- 23 "The Simpsons" bartender
- 24 Merchandise
- 25 Job reward
- 27 Wing
- 28 Horse restraint
- 29 Fizzy drinks
- 32 Floor cleaners
- 36 Hushed
- 39 "Yeah, right!"
- 40 Makes one's own
- 41 Carry
- 42 Acts sullen
- 43 Whole bunch



Yesterday's answer

- 19 Visionary
- 20 A long time
- 21 Go it alone
- 22 Auction cry
- 25 Captivated
- 26 Loser to Herbert Hoover
- 28 Party VIPs
- 30 Skilled
- 31 Fourth-down plays
- 33 Bassoon's cousin
- 34 Antifur org.
- 35 Dance part
- 36 Maple output
- 37 Ceremony words
- 38 Gehrig or Brock



10-20

A XYDI B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-20

CRYPTOQUOTE

C X H M G L O J L I R L I I D K O I C F S

K M E J F M O P L I H M G R C I I F J Z J O

Q F M R V M R L P L B C F S H M G

T L F E J — P L H L I F S J I M G

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: BEFORE I REFUSE TO TAKE YOUR QUESTIONS, I HAVE AN OPENING STATEMENT RONALD REAGAN

Millennial Money: When pinching pennies isn't enough



This Sept. 6, 2017, file photo shows a tip jar with one dollar and five dollar bills and a penny in New York.

Associated Press

By **KELSEY SHEEHY**
of **NerdWallet**

Scaling back streaming subscriptions is solid savings advice for some. But what if the choice you're faced with is not whether to pay for Netflix or Hulu, but whether to pay for food or electricity?

Millions of Americans face food, housing and general financial insecurity every year, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Agriculture. And getting help often means navigating a maze of websites, automated telephone systems and confusing applications only to land on a yearslong waitlist or worse — find out you don't qualify.

The good news: You don't have to figure this out on your own. There are financial counselors, nonprofits and other local and national organizations that exist to help you find your financial footing.

If you're currently facing eviction, can't feed your family or are experiencing some other financial crisis, dial 211 now to talk with a local expert who can connect you to assistance programs for food, housing and utility expenses, medi-

cal bills and other emergencies.

Not in crisis mode yet but barely keeping your head above water? Take these steps to prioritize the money you do have coming in, then get help filling in the gaps.

GO BACK TO BASICS

Start with a budget — even if you don't think you have enough money coming in to have a budget, says Amy Smith, a financial counselor in central Texas. "It doesn't matter how much you're bringing in — any amount of money — because you're at least telling that money where to go," says Smith, who is also the membership engagement coordinator for the Association for Financial Counseling & Planning Education.

Your first budget won't be pretty. Your third or fourth might not be either. That's OK. Try to stick with it and play around with different budgeting methods to find one that works for you.

"When I started this journey, the end of my budget was red," Smith says, indicating that she didn't have the funds to cover all of her expenses. "At least I knew I needed extra money."

You will also know how to reallocate your funds if you get some extra income or a few months of utility assistance.

PRIORITIZE THE ESSENTIALS

If there's not enough money to cover all your expenses, tend to your basic needs first. These include housing, utilities, food, transportation and child care, among other things.

"If that means a credit card doesn't get paid that month, that happens," Smith says.

Bills you can't cover shouldn't be ignored, though. Call the creditor — whether it's your landlord, mortgage company, utility provider or credit card issuer — and explain the situation. Then, ask if there's any help available. Even a waived late fee can help.

TAKE HELP WHERE YOU CAN

Don't let perceived social stigma keep you from getting the help you need. And don't fall into the trap of thinking services like food banks or food stamps aren't for you, or that things aren't "that bad" yet.

It can take time to get from application to assistance, especially for federal programs. The waitlist for some federal housing vouchers can be years long, according to Erik Gartland, a research analyst at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. On the flip side, SNAP benefits (often referred to as food stamps) can kick in within seven days of applying if you have no income, says Dottie Rosenbaum, a senior fellow and director of federal SNAP policy at the CBPP.

Tracking down programs, forms, applications and eligibility requirements is tedious and time consuming, especially if you're facing language barriers, don't have reliable internet access or simply don't have the time because you're caring and providing for your family.

Lean on organizations with the sole focus of connecting people in need to the assistance available. □



This photo courtesy of the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA), provided in October 2022, shows excavation of the East Smithfield plague pits in London, which were used for mass burials in 1348 and 1349.

Associated Press

Genetic twist: Medieval plague may have molded our immunity

By LAURA UNGAR
AP Science Writer

Our Medieval ancestors left us with a biological legacy: Genes that may have helped them survive the Black Death make us more susceptible to certain diseases today.

It's a prime example of the way germs shape us over time, scientists say in a new study published Wednesday in the journal Nature.

"Our genome today is a reflection of our whole evolutionary history" as we adapt to different germs, said Luis Barreiro, a senior author of the research. Some, like those behind the bubonic plague, have had a big impact on our immune systems.

The Black Death in the 14th century was the single deadliest event in recorded history, spreading throughout Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa and wiping out up to 30% to 50% of the population.

Barreiro and his colleagues at the University of Chicago, McMaster University in Ontario and the Pasteur Institute in Paris examined ancient DNA samples from the bones of more than 200 people from London and Denmark who died over about 100 years that stretched before, during, and after the Black Death swept through that region. They identified four genes that, depending on the variant, either protected

against or increased susceptibility to the bacteria that causes bubonic plague, which is most often transmitted by the bite of an infected flea.

They found that what helped people in Medieval times led to problems generations later — raising the frequency of mutations detrimental in modern times.

Some of the same genetic variants identified as protective against the plague are associated with certain autoimmune disorders, such as Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. In these sorts of diseases, the immune system that defends the body against disease and infection attacks the body's own healthy tissues. □

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'Black Adam,' a superhero franchise born on a Rock

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

Not long into "Black Adam," a preteen boy looks up at the muscled hulk of Dwayne Johnson and begs for his help: "We could use a superhero right now." Speak for yourself, kid.

Do we need another superhero with another convoluted origin story that stretches back thousands of years and fulfills a whacko destiny? Do we really need another clutch of secondary level heroes to muddy focus? We're almost 40 deep into the Marvel Cinematic Universe and a dozen in the DC universe. You can almost smell the fumes now, can't you?

"Black Adam" isn't bad, it's just predictable and color-by-numbers, stealing from other films like an intellectual property super-villain. But Johnson is a natural in the title role, mixing might with humor and able to deliver those necessary wooden lines. Why he hasn't had a starring role in a DC or Marvel superhero flick until now is astonishing — c'mon, he's built himself into a freaking superhero in street clothes already.

Like Marvel's "Eternals," "Black Adam" gets out of the blocks very sluggishly with the tangled tale of our setting — Kahndaq, a fictional Middle Eastern kingdom in 2,600 B.C. that has wizards, a blood-thirsty king, a magical crown and Eternium, a rare metallic



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Dwayne Johnson in a scene from "Black Adam."

ore with energy-manipulating properties (Hello, Vibranium from "Black Panther"). Flash-forward to present day, where Kahndaq is under the cruel rule of the organized crime syndicate Intergang and its citizens are ripe to rebel. They think they may have a leader in Black Adam (here Teth Adam, when he is introduced), who is released from his 5,000-year-long tomb and is naturally cranky. Is he a force for good or bad? (Or for a new sub-franchise?) The answer is yes to all.

Yet the other superheroes in the DC pantheon aren't sure about the new guy and send what can only be described as the Plan B of muscle from leftover members of a knock-off organization called the Justice Society of America.

There's Doctor Fate (a dollar-store Doctor Strange

played by Pierce Brosnan, who somehow keeps his dignity), Atom Smasher (Noah Centineo, nicely playing a dweeby and always hungry giant), Aldis Hodge as a one-note Hawkman and Quintessa Swindell as Cyclone, who can control — checks notes — the wind. They apparently left at home the superhero with the ability to open jars.

Black Adam is more than a match for all of them combined. He can fly, move as fast as The Flash, catch rockets, deflect bullets and harness his own bluish electricity. Mostly he does this weirdly passive thing of just floating. "I kneel before no one" he intones, which might explain it.

Director Jaume Collet-Serra and the design team do a great job in every department but are

let down by a derivative and baggy screenplay by Adam Sztykiel, Rory Haines and Sohrab Noshirvani that goes from one violent scene to another like a video game in order to paper over a plot both undercooked and overcooked. At one point, with the audience exhausted by all the carnage, they introduce skeletons who rise up as a legion from hell, just what we wanted.

They nicely include pockets of humor that DC has not always done well — a recurring bit with "Baby Come Back" and teaching Black Adam satire are fun; a Clint Eastwood gag fails — and there may have been three natural endings piling up before the final, manipulative one. ("This can only end one way," says the script. Don't believe it.)

Amidst the punching superheroes are two humans — a rebel leader and her skateboard-and-comics-loving pre-teen son, played superbly by Sarah Shahi and Bodhi Sabongui, respectively. Comedian Mohammed Amer is a much-needed bolt of bright humor.

Most intriguing — and the angle most fruitful to lean into — is the notion of hero itself. The Justice Society members are shocked to find that they aren't seen as heroic to the residents of Kahndaq, living 27 years under oppression. Black Adam has come to help, even if he's a little more violent. Residents wonder where were the guys with all the superpowers for almost three decades while they suffered — a nice dig at Western nations.

The number of — ahem — call-backs to other films is pretty sad — "Tomb Raider," "Back to the Future" and plenty of "Star Wars" (even, unforgivably, the line "You're our only hope".) It's a film that is sometimes self-aware, as when the kid urges Black Adam to come up with a catchphrase that will sell lunchboxes.

He does, but it makes little sense: "Tell them, 'The man in black sent you.'" Wait, he was sent by someone else? Do they mean Johnny Cash? Actually that may be a clue. What the filmmakers probably had in mind was cash — selling those lunchboxes. □

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Former President Donald Trump pauses while speaking at a rally at the Minden Tahoe Airport in Minden, Nev., Saturday, Oct. 8, 2022.

Associated Press

Audiobook features talks between Trump and Bob Woodward

NEW YORK (AP) — More than eight hours of conversations between Donald Trump and Bob Woodward will be released next week as an audiobook.

Simon & Schuster Audio announced Tuesday that "The Trump Tapes" will be published Oct. 25. Woodward, along with Washington Post colleague Robert Costa, interviewed Trump in 2016, when he was seeking the Republican nomination for president.

Woodward then interviewed the then-president 19 times in 2019-2020 for his bestselling book on the Trump administration, "Rage."

"I'm doing something here that I've never done before, presenting the lengthy, raw interviews of my work," Woodward comments in the introduction. "I wanted to put as much of Trump's voice, his own words, out there for the historical record

so people can hear and make their own assessments."

Former first lady Melania Trump, Donald Trump Jr. and Vice President Mike Pence are among those who stopped by while Woodward and the president were speaking. The audiobook also includes Woodward's discussions with Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and national security adviser Robert O'Brien. □

Brittney Griner spends 32nd birthday in Russian prison

By DOUG FEINBERG
AP Basketball Writer

Brittney Griner spent her 32nd birthday in a Russian prison, awaiting an appeal to her nine-year sentence for drug possession that's set for next week.

The WNBA star has been especially down lately, according to her lawyers. They were with her for part of her birthday on Tuesday. Maria Blagovolina, a partner at Rybalkin, Gortsunyan, Dyakin, said it wasn't much of a celebration, but that Griner's attorneys passed along well wishes from family and friends.

"She did smile, it was really good to see her smiling," Blagovolina wrote in an email to The Associated Press. Griner later released a statement through her agent, Lindsay Kagawa Colas.

"Thank you everyone for fighting so hard to get me home. All the support and love are definitely helping me," Griner said.

Griner's appeal hearing is scheduled for Oct. 25. While it's unlikely the appeal will overturn her conviction, her lawyers hope it could lessen the sentence.

"We hope the term of the sentence will be reduced," Blagovolina said.

Griner was convicted Aug. 4 in an unusually swift verdict and given a longer sentence than most Russians receive for similar offenses. The 6-foot-9 center, who played professionally in Russia during the WNBA offseason, was detained on Feb. 17, a week before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Police said they found vape canisters with cannabis oil in Griner's luggage at Sheremetyevo Airport in Moscow. Her lawyers said she had been prescribed cannabis for pain, and Griner said she had inadvertently packed them and had no criminal intent.

Griner is also waiting for a potential swap of prisoners between Russia and the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken took the unusual step of revealing publicly in July that Washington had made a "substantial proposal" to get Griner home, along with Paul Whelan, an American serving a 16-year sentence in Russia for espionage.

Blinken didn't elaborate, but The AP and other news

organizations have reported that Washington has offered to exchange Griner and Whelan for Viktor Bout, a Russian arms dealer who is serving a 25-year sentence in the U.S. and once earned the nickname the "merchant of death."

The White House said it has not yet received a productive response from Russia to the offer.

Her friends and family are trying to keep Griner's name in the forefront of people's minds amid delicate negotiations between the U.S. and Russia that seem to be stalled.

"I pray for her mental health and sanity and us doing what we can do to help keep her name out there," said South Carolina coach Dawn Staley, who coached Griner at last year's Tokyo Olympics. "To get her home. I hope it's at a time that's sooner rather than later. She's one of our own in an incredible situation. It's going to take positive synergy, prayers, and some powerful people making some deals to get her home."

Golden State guard Stephen Curry took time dur-



WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner is escorted from a courtroom after a hearing in Khimki just outside Moscow, Russia, on Aug. 4, 2022.

Associated Press

ing the Warriors' championship ring ceremony Tuesday night to make an impassioned plea in support of Griner.

"We want to continue to use our platform and the opportunity to shout out a very special member of the basketball community. Brittney Griner's birthday is today, she's 32," Curry told the crowd before the defending NBA champions beat the Los Angeles Lakers. "We want to continue to let her name be known and we pray ... it's been 243

days since she was wrongfully incarcerated in Russia. We hope that she comes home soon, that everybody's doing their part to get her home."

The U.S. women's team won its fourth consecutive World Cup title earlier this month and captain Breanna Stewart said that the medal was dedicated to Griner, who would have been on the team had she not been in jail.

Griner was honored when she heard that from her lawyers. □

Bell says Wallace apologized on flight home from Las Vegas

By JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

Bubba Wallace and Christopher Bell shared a flight home from Las Vegas, and Wallace apologized during the trip to his fellow Toyota teammate for the incident that crippled Bell's championship chances.

Bell said Wallace also apologized to the entire Toyota group in the Monday competition meeting. Wallace has been suspended one race by NASCAR for a dangerous act of retaliation that inadvertently collected Bell.

"We actually flew home together on Sunday night and he did apologize Sunday, and then he addressed our entire group on Monday and the competition meeting," Bell said Wednesday. "He just apologized for what went down and the fact that



Bubba Wallace, right, argues with Kyle Larson after the two crashed during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race Sunday, Oct. 16, 2022, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

we got taken out is unfortunate circumstances."

Wallace has been suspended for Sunday's race at Homestead-Miami Speedway for deliberately retaliating against reigning NASCAR champion Kyle Larson at Las Vegas. Wallace hooked Larson in the

rear corner of his car to spin him directly into traffic, where Larson drilled Bell and ended Bell's race. Bell drives for Joe Gibbs Racing and Wallace drives for 23XI Racing, which is co-owned by JGR driver Denny Hamlin. The two teams have an alliance,

and Toyota demands its teams work together.

Bell and Hamlin are the only two Toyota drivers still eligible to qualify for next month's winner-take-all championship finale, and Bell is now ranked last in the eight-driver field.

There are four slots in the championship finale and Joey Logano claimed the first spot for Team Penske and Ford with his win Sunday at Las Vegas. But the entire opening race of the third round of NASCAR's playoffs has been overshadowed by Wallace, who lost his cool when he and Larson were racing for position and neither would give an inch of room.

Larson ended up running Wallace into the wall, and Wallace immediately retaliated by chasing Larson down the track and hooking him back into traffic.

By hitting the passing car of Bell, Larson's trajectory was stopped before he slammed directly into the wall.

Wallace then had a shoving match with Larson after the crash and also pushed away a NASCAR official. The suspension handed down Tuesday falls under NASCAR's behavioral policy and technically covers most of Wallace's actions at Las Vegas.

But Steve O'Donnell, the executive in charge of competition and racing operations, said the penalties were for Wallace's dangerous and deliberate retaliation against Larson, not the fracas a few moments later. O'Donnell said Wallace's hooking of Larson was "really a dangerous act that we thought was intentional and put other competitors at risk." □

As MLB playoffs expand, regular-season success matters less

By **RONALD BLUM**
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Major League Baseball views expanded playoffs as the more the merrier. Not for the Los Angeles Dodgers, Atlanta Braves, New York Mets and St. Louis Cardinals.

The National League's four winningest teams failed to reach the League Championship Series, six months of accomplishment undone in just a few days.

Philadelphia is vying to become the first third-place team to reach the World Series after clinching the 12th and final playoff spot on Oct. 3, three weeks after the Dodgers locked up the first.

Years of expansion have turned the Fall Classic into



Fans cheer behind the dugout during the ninth inning in Game 4 of baseball's National League Division Series between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Atlanta Braves, Saturday, Oct. 15, 2022, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

a month-plus tournament and the 162-game season into a postseason prologue.

"The hot team is really dif-

ficult to beat in general," Houston pitcher Justin Verlander said. "And then so you take the best teams in the regular season, have

them take off five days, which we're not used to, and then have the hot team keep playing ... I think you can see how easily you can lose that series."

Philadelphia, with the National League's sixth-best record, opened the NLCS with a win at San Diego, which was No. 5.

Houston, the American League's winningest team, opens the ALCS on Wednesday night against the New York Yankees, who had the No. 2 record.

All remaining teams are among the top nine payrolls: the Yankees third (\$254 million), Phillies fourth (\$237 million), Padres fifth (\$221 million) and Astros ninth (\$186 million).

From 1903-68, the teams with the top record in each

league advanced directly to the World Series.

Then playoffs were added and only 15 teams with their league's top record won the World Series from 1969-93, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. After a second round of playoffs was introduced, just six clubs with their league's top mark took the title from 1995-2011 and five have won it all since wild-card games started in 2012.

And this year included an entire wild-card round that led to byes for the four top teams — along with five off days.

"Just adding more teams to the mix makes it more difficult of a road," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "Especially in baseball probably a little bit more so than other sports, kind of any team can win on a given day."

Four of the six winningest regular-season teams failed to reach this year's LCS. The Dodgers (111) and Braves (101) lost in the best-of-five Division Series. The Mets (101) and Cardinals (93) were knocked out in the best-of-three wild-card round.

"You could be the best team and your season comes down to a three-game series. I don't like that format going forward for a 162-game season," pitcher Max Scherzer said last October.

The postseason doubled to four teams in 1969 with the start of the LCS, doubled again to eight in 1995 with Division Series, increased to 10 in 2012 with wild-card games and to 12 this year. Only two teams with winning records failed to make the playoffs, Milwaukee and Baltimore — and they would have if the players' association had agreed to Commissioner Rob Manfred's 14-team plan.

Among the players' proposals was expanding the Division Series to best-of-seven with reseeding after each round. They also said they would consider MLB's proposal for a 14-team postseason if it included giving the higher seed a "ghost win" — starting with a 1-0 series lead. □

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